BELMONT MILL, UPPER CHARCOAL AND LUMBER PILE
(Nevada Belmont Mill)
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest Service Road No. 623
Ely vicinity
White Pine County
Nevada

HAER NV-46-R
HAER NV-46-R

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

BELMONT MILL,
UPPER CHARCOAL AND LUMBER PILE

HAER No. NV-46-R

Location: Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest Service Road No. 623, Ely vicinity, White Pine County, Nevada.
U.S. Geological Survey, Seligman Canyon, Nevada, 7.5 Quadrangle (1992), Township 16 North, Range 57 East, Section 1.
UTM Zone 11, Easting 2060406.61, Northing 14267138.52 (southeast corner of structure) (NAD 83).
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Feature No. F19.

Significance: The Tonopah Belmont Development Company (TBDC) was one of the most important companies created during Nevada's early twentieth-century mining boom. As ore deposits in its central Nevada mines were depleted, the company sought new claims to resurrect its fortunes. In 1926 TBDC built the Belmont Mill near Hamilton to process lead and silver ore from its recently acquired claims in the White Pine mining district of eastern Nevada. The small pilot mill employed the most recent advances in table concentration and flotation mineral processing techniques, and the company erected numerous other buildings and structures to support the mining and milling work. The site was largely abandoned by TBDC after a few years, but later owners used the mill and associated structures for smaller operations. Today, although most of the equipment has been removed, the Belmont Mill site is one of the only intact early twentieth-century mill complexes in eastern Nevada. Importantly, much domestic architecture remain to provide a glimpse of daily life there, including relatively ephemeral structures like the upper charcoal and lumber pile. The mill complex is a tangible reminder of the decline and failure of a once-powerful company and, thereby, of the boom and bust cycle so common in the mining industry. The subsequent modification and reuse of the site for small-scale operations typifies the ceaseless hum of optimism that sustains the mining industry.

Description: The upper charcoal and lumber pile is located on the hillside northwest of the mill (NV-46-A), along the access road that begins in the canyon bottom and winds up the small drainage on the north end of the site. The structure sits just north of an intersection where the road continues west while a switchback leads to the upper boardinghouse (NV-46-N), the upper outhouse (NV-46-O), and the shed (NV-46-P). The structure is on the opposite (east) side of the road from the trailer (NV-46-Q).

The upper charcoal and lumber pile measures about 24' north to south and 12' east to west, and appears to be the remains of a small building or an open, crib-type structure. There are no visible remains of a foundation or roof. Lumber is piled on the ground and is of a wide variety of dimensions, including 2" x 4", 4" x 4", 2" x 12", and 6" x 6". A steel drum and a piece of corrugated metal, and other scraps of metal are also on the

ground. Within a V-shaped area created by two timbers on the down-slope side are extensive fragments of coal or charcoal. To the south of the feature, closer to the road intersection, are two metal standpipes within what appear to be the remains of a wood housing. This may have been part of the site's water supply system that led from the water tank (NV-46-S) to the mill and domestic buildings in the canyon bottom. It is possible that the pipes were originally connected by a U-joint with a spigot at the top to provide an access point for the buildings north and west of the mill.

History: See the Narrative Overview in HAER No. NV-46 for a broad contextual history.

It is not clear if the upper charcoal and lumber pile dates to 1926, the original period of construction for the site, or to the period when the upper boardinghouse was occupied in the mid-1970s. An oral account states that the structure was a fuel (wood and coal) storage area for the occupants of the upper boardinghouse in the mid-1970s and it is perhaps best understood in the context of that building.[1]

The west part of the upper boardinghouse may have been built by TBDC in 1926 as one of four residences originally on the site; the other three were removed by 1939 (see NV-46-N for further discussion). In ca. 1940, a photograph was taken facing roughly due north that provides a view of many of the mill site buildings, including a residence on the access road northwest of the mill that appears to the residence that became the upper boardinghouse (before the east addition was made).

As early as 1945, Andrew Dowd, a mining engineer, and his wife Ermyl lived at the site, perhaps as employees of the owner or as unofficial lessees, and also as caretakers.[2] After Andrew's death sometime after 1956, Ermyl continued to live at the site and worked as caretaker for the claimholder, Don Jennings. By the 1960s she made her home in the kitchen of the lower boardinghouse. Beginning at this time and perhaps earlier, she rented rooms and provided meals in the boardinghouse to miners working nearby claims, a practice she continued until the mid-1970s to supplement the limited income from her own mining claims.[3]

In the 1970s Mrs. Dowd married Carl Tillman, the caretaker for a nearby property. In the mid-1970s the couple moved from the lower boardinghouse to the residence behind the mill, and it was probably at this time that they built the east addition to the residence, the upper outhouse (NV-46-O), and the shed (NV-46-R). The charcoal and lumber pile and any associated structure reportedly were created and/or used at this time. In the late 1970s or even as late as 1980 (perhaps when the property changed hands and Jennings no longer paid a caretaker's fee), Dowd and Tillman moved to Ely, where the latter worked

---

[1] Interview with Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., 1 October 2010.

[2] Interviews with Hal Jensen and Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., 1 October 2010. Andrew Dowd was mentioned definitively in association with the Belmont mine in 1956. See L. E. Davis et al., "The Mineral Industry of Nevada," in US Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook Area Reports, 1956, Vol. III (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1958), 761.

[3] Interview with Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr.

at the Hotel Nevada.[4] The charcoal and lumber pile would have fallen into disuse at this time and may have been heavily scavenged by later visitors to the site. Today the structure is in very poor condition, the remains so altered that its original appearance and purpose are uncertain.

Sources: See HAER No. NV-46.

Historian: Anne Oliver, Principal, Oliver Conservation Group. Fieldwork for the project was conducted in the fall of 2010. Project documentation was accepted by HABS/HAER in 2011.

Project Information: See HAER No. NV-46 for complete details. In summary, this project was completed under a contract between the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and a consulting team under the direction of ajc architects (Salt Lake City, Utah), in consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. The project historian was Anne Oliver, historic preservation consultant with Oliver Conservation Group. Matt Wallace, intern architect with ajc architects, was responsible for the architectural measured drawings and completed all fieldwork and final drawings with the assistance of Oliver Smith Callis, draftsman. The photography was produced by Steve Tregeagle Photography under the direction of Steve Tregeagle and with the assistance of Heath Brown.

[4] Ibid., and interview with Ronald Jordan, 29 September 2010. Tillman died in the early 1990s on the dance floor of the casino and Dowd probably died several years before that.